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Appraisal of "The Hour of Choice"
by a Group of Hessian Civil Servants

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INTRODUCTION

When, early in 1956, a seminar was conducted for a number of civil service officers of the Hessian Land-Government, the Frankfurt Public Affairs Office had the opportunity to show the USIA-feature film "Hour of Choice." To ascertain the effect the film might have on this particular group, the Research Staff was asked to design a short write-in-questionnaire - as actual interviewing at the seminar was not feasible. The questionnaire aimed at assessing the general reaction of the audience to the film as well as attitudes toward the concept of a United Europe, (since this was the principal theme of the film). The questionnaire was distributed right after the showing and returned by 137 participants in the seminar the next morning. Administration of the questionnaire was handled by the Film Officer of the Frankfurt Public Affairs Office. The processing and the analysis of the data was performed by the Research Staff.

SUMMARY

The belief that this particular group of civil service officers of Land Hesse would be a critical audience for the USIA-feature film "Hour of Choice" largely because of their high educational level was borne out by the results. Whether because of this basic fact, or because everyone was already in favor of the idea of a unification of Western Europe, appraisal of the film tended to be luke-warm. Most respondents thought that the film expressed the ideal of a United Europe only "fairly well" rather than "very well," or even "well." Their opinion as to how successful the film was in expressing this idea appears to be a factor influencing their general liking or disliking of the film.

Since almost everyone was already in favor of the idea, the film naturally could not do much to convert anyone. It did, however, cause four out of ten to regard their pro-unification attitudes as strengthened.

The great majority thought it would be worthwhile to show this picture to other groups within and outside of Germany. Yet fully a quarter had criticisms on this score. They either did not think it should be shown at all or wanted it revised and improved first.

Section I - Composition of the Audience

As might be expected, the civil service officers attending this seminar are far from representative of the general population. It is a predominantly male group (96%), and enjoys a level of schooling much higher than is found among the general population. Among the civil servants at least 88% have gone further than the elementary school, and 32% have received their Abitur or gone on to the university. In the general population only 17% have gone beyond elementary school, while 4% have received their Abitur or gone on to the university.

From past studies we know that the higher the educational level the more likelihood that the group will be a critical one. This fact should be kept in mind when reading the following pages.

	<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Number of cases</u>	<u>West German Population</u>
Sex:			
Male	96%	132	43%
Female	4	5	57
	<u>100%</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>100%</u>
Education:			
Elementary school	11%	15	83%
Middle school and High School without Abitur (diploma)	56	77	13
High school with Abitur	29	40	2
University	3	4	2
No answer	1	1	-
	<u>100%</u>	<u>137</u>	<u>100%</u>
Age:			
25 to 34 years	20%	28	
35 to 44 years	29	40	
45 to 54 years	38	51	
55 to 64 years	13	18	
	<u>100%</u>	<u>137</u>	

Section II - Basic Attitudes

ALMOST EVERYONE FAVORS EUROPEAN UNIFICATION ...

In order to properly assess reaction to the "Hour of Choice" it was necessary to know the attitude of the group towards the unification of Western Europe - since the message of the film is that a European Union would benefit all nations concerned, and hence should be striven for.

Almost everyone in this group of Hessian civil servants declared himself in favor of the idea (96% were "for" a unification of Western Europe).

"Are you for or against a unification of Western Europe?"

For it	96%
Against it	4
	<u>100%</u>

EIGHT-TENTHS STILL FAVOR EUROPEAN UNIFICATION EVEN IF IT BRINGS ECONOMIC TROUBLES AT FIRST ...

The appeal of European integration is so strong with this particular group that very few would desert the ideal when faced with the prospects of some economic dislocations at the beginning. Eight out of ten (79%) are still unequivocally for it. An additional 3% say they would still be in favor of the idea if the burdens were equally distributed, while another 3% basically in favor of the idea give other qualifications. The 4% who were initially opposed to the whole idea are only increased to 13%, when this possible unpleasant prospect is held up.

"Would you be for a unification of Western Europe if this meant we would first fare somewhat worse economically?"

Yes	79%
Yes, if equal burden for all	3
Yes, other qualified answer	3
No	13
No opinion	<u>2</u>
	<u>100%</u>

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS LEAD AS MOST VITAL REASON FOR
EUROPEAN UNIFICATION ...

Economic reasons were chosen most often (by 72%) from a list of four reasons (military, economic, political, and cultural) as the one for which it was most necessary to achieve a unification of Western Europe. While a majority also selected political reasons (58%), relatively few selected military or cultural reasons (33% and 30% respectively).

"Many reasons are advanced for a unification of Western Europe - in your opinion, for which of the following reasons is it most necessary to achieve a unification of Western Europe?"

For military reasons	33%
For economic reasons	72
For political reasons	58
For cultural reasons	30
No opinion	1
	<u>194%</u> @

@ Some respondents gave more than one answer.

Section III - Appraisal of the Film

FILM LIKED BY SIX OUT OF TEN ...

While the film was liked by six-tenths (61%) of the people who saw it, it should be noted in the following table, that the overwhelming majority of the replies fell into the middle brackets, i.e. 90% of all responses pegged their liking of the film as either "well" or "not so well". Only 2% used the extremely positive response and only 8% used the two extreme negative categories.

"How did you like the film?"

Extremely well	2%
Well	59
Not so well	31
Not much	6
Not at all	2
	<u>100%</u>

As was anticipated when examining the composition of the sample, those civil servants with the higher levels of education liked the film less than did those with middle or lower levels of education.

"How did you like the film?"	Abitur and University	Elementary, Middle and High school
Extremely well, well	50%	67%
Not too well	43	25
Not much, not at all	7	8
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

PRESENTATION MORE CRITICIZED ASPECT OF FILM ...

In response to a query asking for their criticism of the film, a third (34%) replied that they had none to make. Among the criticisms which were made, most concerned the presentation of the subject. And among those who made this kind of a reply, over half seemed to be concerned with the film's lack of clarity and hard-hittingness.

"Considering the photography, speaker, text, presentation of subject matter, etc., of the film - what criticisms do you have to offer about the film generally?"

SUMMARY TABLE

<u>NO ADVERSE CRITICISMS</u>	(34%)
<u>WEAKNESSES IN PRESENTATION</u>	(38%)
The film could have been more hard-hitting	12%
The advantages of a European Union should have been shown more clearly	10
The film was too brief, not elaborate enough	9
The film put too much stress on American conditions as compared to conditions in Europe	5
Other weaknesses	2
<u>TECHNICAL DEFICIENCIES</u>	(33%)
The execution of the basic idea was unsatisfactory	12
The sequence of pictures was confusing	11
The photography of the film was unsatisfactory	4
Diagrams should have been presented	3
Other technical deficiencies	3
<u>MISCELLANEOUS</u>	(4%) 109@
"Considering the photography, speaker, text, presentation of subject matter, etc., of the film - what criticisms do you have to offer about the film generally?"	
<u>NO ADVERSE CRITICISM</u>	(34%)
"I think the subject is well selected and it is very cleverly presented, too, and therefore my criticism is entirely favorable."	
"It's an excellent topic to discuss."	
"There is nothing about the film that displeases me."	

(Cont'd on next page)

@ Some respondents gave more than one answer.

(Cont'd from preceding page)

WEAKNESSES IN PRESENTATION

(38%)

The film could have been more hard-hitting:

12%

"The subject was presented in a rather half-hearted manner.
Somehow you had the idea you were seeing a newsreel."
"The presentation wasn't such as to inspire people with enthusiasm for an idea."
"For the broad masses of people the film should be a little meatier."

The advantages of a European union should have been shown more clearly:

10

"The story could be elaborated on. It should be shown even more clearly that the USSR's game is power politics, and that therefore it's imperative for the West European countries to unite. This should have been made more urgent."
"The film didn't elucidate the economic consequences of such an alliance clearly enough. The political as well as military aspects of the question are sufficiently known, as it is."
"They should have made it clear to the audience what advantages can can be expected from such a union."

The film was too brief, not elaborate enough:

9

"As a short feature, the film is well done in every respect, but I think it desirable to deal with this topic more broadly."
"The film could be longer. They should point up the contrast between a war-ravaged country and a country back on its feet more clearly."
"In such a short feature the problem cannot be thoroughly presented."

The film put too much stress on American conditions as compared to conditions in Europe:

5

"American ideas were too prominent in the film."
"American institutions served as a model for the film, but not all of them can be introduced in Europe."
"The United States shouldn't be mentioned so often in this film."

Other weaknesses:

2

"The film would achieve a greater effect in Germany if it had been made under a German director."
"This film does not reflect German mentality. If such a film were to be shown in Germany, I would commission a German director and crew with shooting it."
"The film does not appeal strongly enough to Germans."

TECHNICAL DEFICIENCIES

(33%)

The execution of the basic idea was unsatisfactory:

12

"The way the individual scenes were put together as well as the accompanying text are not suited to promote the European idea. At least, that's what I think."
"The film didn't succeed in any way in illustrating this problem competently."

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The sequence of pictures was confusing:

11%

"The way the story was reeled off somehow was awfully jerky."

"I felt the composition of scenes was not continuous."

"The individual scenes changed too rapidly."

The photography of the film was unsatisfactory:

4

"I'm sure the cameramen could have done a better job."

"The photography of the film left much to be desired."

Diagrams should have been presented:

3

"What I missed were illuminating charts on which the economic advantages of a United Europe are demonstrated in the simplest form."

"They should have included graphic diagrams so as to round out the whole story. These diagrams should be most simple. I think they'd stick better in a person's mind than a jumble of individual scenes."

Other technical deficiencies:

3

"The musical arrangement, especially in those scenes dealing with the church, was unsuitable."

"The speaker couldn't be understood clearly."

MISCELLANEOUS

(4%)

"Showing the profile of Adenauer meant exerting a political influence on the audience, for European integration does not hinge on his decision only."

"A healthy Germany is a prerequisite for European unification. Europe integrated, makes German reunification more difficult, therefore reunification should come before European unification."

109%@

@ Some respondents gave more than one criticism.

MOST REPONDENTS THINK FILM EXPRESSED IDEA OF A UNITED EUROPE
ONLY "FAIRLY WELL" ...

Since we already know that this particular audience is overwhelmingly in favor of the integration of Western Europe, which is the theme of the film, their answers to the following question on how well the film expressed the idea of a United Europe should be particularly studied.

About half (49%) said that the "Hour of Choice" expresses the idea of a United Europe only "fairly well." Between the inner, more conservative responses of "well" and "fairly well" over eight-tenths (81%) of the group are accounted for. This pattern of reply is strikingly similar to that given in response to the original query "How did you like the film?" While the pattern is similar, the level is slightly lower than that concerning the film in general.

"Do you think the film expresses the idea of a United Europe very well, well, fairly well, poorly or very poorly?"

Very well	4%
Well	32
Fairly well	49
Poorly	13
Very poorly	2
	100%

A cross-tabulation of opinion on the film as an expression of the idea of a United Europe as against general liking of the film, reveals that the more they think that the film is doing a good job in expressing the idea of a United Europe, the better they like the film.

"Do you think the film expresses the idea of a United Europe very well, well, fairly well, poorly or very poorly?"

Very well, well	Fairly well	Poorly, very poorly
(49)	(67)	(21)

"How did you like the film?"

Extremely well, well	100%	52%	-%
Not too well	-	43	67
Not much, not at all	-	5	33
	100%	100%	100%

OVERWHELMING MAJORITY BELIEVES EUROPEAN UNITY WOULD BRING ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES ...

Within the film heavy emphasis was laid on the economic advantages which could accrue to all Europe from a unification of the various countries. That this treatment is the correct line to take is shown by the fact that 83% believe that the unification of Western Europe would bring the economic advantages indicated in the film.

"Do you believe a unification of Western Europe would bring us the economic advantages indicated in the film?"

Yes	83%
No	9
Qualified answer	4
No opinion	4
	100%

As was shown earlier, replies to many of the questions concerning this film are tinged by their opinion as to how well the picture expresses the idea of a unified Europe (an idea that almost all of them favor). A cross-tabulation of the results of the previous question with belief in the economic advantages of a European union is presented below. It is easy to see that, again, those who think the film does a good job in presenting the idea of a European union are more likely to believe it would bring the economic advantages shown in the film.

"Do you think the film expresses the idea of a United Europe very well, well, fairly well, poorly or very poorly?"

Very well, well	Fairly well	Poorly, very poorly
(49)	(67)	(21)

"Do you believe a unification of Western Europe would bring us the economic advantages indicated in the film?"

Yes	94%	79%	71%
No	-	11	19
Qualified answer	2	6	5
No opinion	4	4	5
	100%	100%	100%

Section IV - Impact

INTENSIFICATION OF PRO-UNIFICATION ATTITUDES ACHIEVED ...

Since as we know almost everyone in this group (96%) was in favor of the idea of a unification of Western Europe before seeing the film, it would indeed be a notable achievement to register any affect at all. The fact, therefore, that 58% said that it had not influenced their attitudes should not be taken as discouraging. Rather it is the four our of ten (39%) who said that their attitude in favor of a united Europe was intensified as a result of seeing the film which can be ascribed to the credit of the picture.

Had this been a normal interview situation rather than the simple paper and pencil questionnaire that it had to be under the circumstances, it would have been interesting to have followed up on those individuals who admitted to a changed attitude as a result of seeing the film "Hour of Choice" i.e. the 2% who said that they previously had been rather opposed to the idea but now were for it, and the one person (in rounding the percentages shown as 1%) who said he had been turned against the idea of a unification of Western Europe because of the film.

"Has this film in any way influenced your attitude toward the European idea?"

Yes, it has intensified my attitude favoring a United Europe	39%
Yes, I used to be indifferent or more against it, but now I'm for it	2
Yes, I used to be indifferent or more for it, but now I'm inclined to oppose it	1
Yes, it has intensified my negative attitude toward the European idea	-
No, it has not influence my attitude	<u>58</u> 100%

GREAT MAJORITY CONSIDERS FILM WORTH SHOWING IN GERMANY ...

Under the assumption that respondents upon whom the film had had a good affect will be more likely to feel that others should see the film too, and conversely, where the film had a poor affect, the audience will be likely to feel that there is little purpose in showing it to others, the group was asked which groups in the population should be shown the film - if the film should be shown at all.

The great majority gave answers naming various segments, most of which were, naturally enough, within Germany, although 5% considered other countries.

There was considerable criticism of the film, however. A full quarter of the group (24%) gave criticisms which should not be overlooked. Seven per cent felt that it wasn't worthwhile showing the film to any groups, and an additional 17% wanted the film revised and improved before release elsewhere.

"To which groups in the population should this film be shown these days, or do you feel that it should not be shown at all?"

WITHIN GERMANY (74%)

To all social groups: 51%

"My opinion is that this film should be shown to all Germans."

"The whole West German population should be enlightened by this film."

"Everybody, no matter to what walk of life he belongs, should see this film."

To the youth: 9

"To the young people in occupational schools, and to the upper classes of elementary schools and secondary schools."

"To the students at high schools and universities."

To politicians: 3

"This film should be shown to the responsible politicians.

The people are already familiar with the idea of a united Europe."

"This film should be shown to all political parties."

2

To the middle classes:

"It should be shown to middle class people, for workers and capitalists are already used to thinking in international terms."

"To the bourgeois classes."

(Cont'd on next page)



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To the working classes: 2%

"Films of that kind should be shown to the lower walks of society."

"To the workers."

To the rural population: 2

"Above all, the country people because they are nervous about a sudden fall in prices of agricultural products if they are no longer protected by tariffs."

"To the farmers."

To other social groups: 5

"Show it to people who live in middle-sized and small towns."

"It should be shown to publishers of newspapers."

"To trade unions, cooperatives and small businessmen."

"To those people who are only a little or not at all interested in the political sections of the daily papers."

OUTSIDE GERMANY (5%)

To West Europe generally: 3%

"It should be shown to governmental bodies, politicians and other responsible personalities of the nations concerned."

"First of all, interest in the European idea has to be aroused in the West European nations."

To nations exclusive of Germany: 2

"Above all this film should be shown in France."

"There is no need to make propaganda for the West European idea in Western Germany, but it is necessary to boost the idea in our neighboring countries."

CRITICAL ANSWERS (24%)

The film should be improved first: 17%

"This film should be shown in an improved form wherever it is possible."

"The film is not long enough to produce a lasting effect."

"The film needs to be revised. The central idea should be presented more clearly, and then it should be shown to all social groups."

"It is outdated."

"The way it is now, the film leads people to form wrong ideas of the basic European problems. It doesn't deal with the unavoidable political disputes that will precede a European integration."

The film should not be shown: 7

"This film shouldn't be given too much publicity."

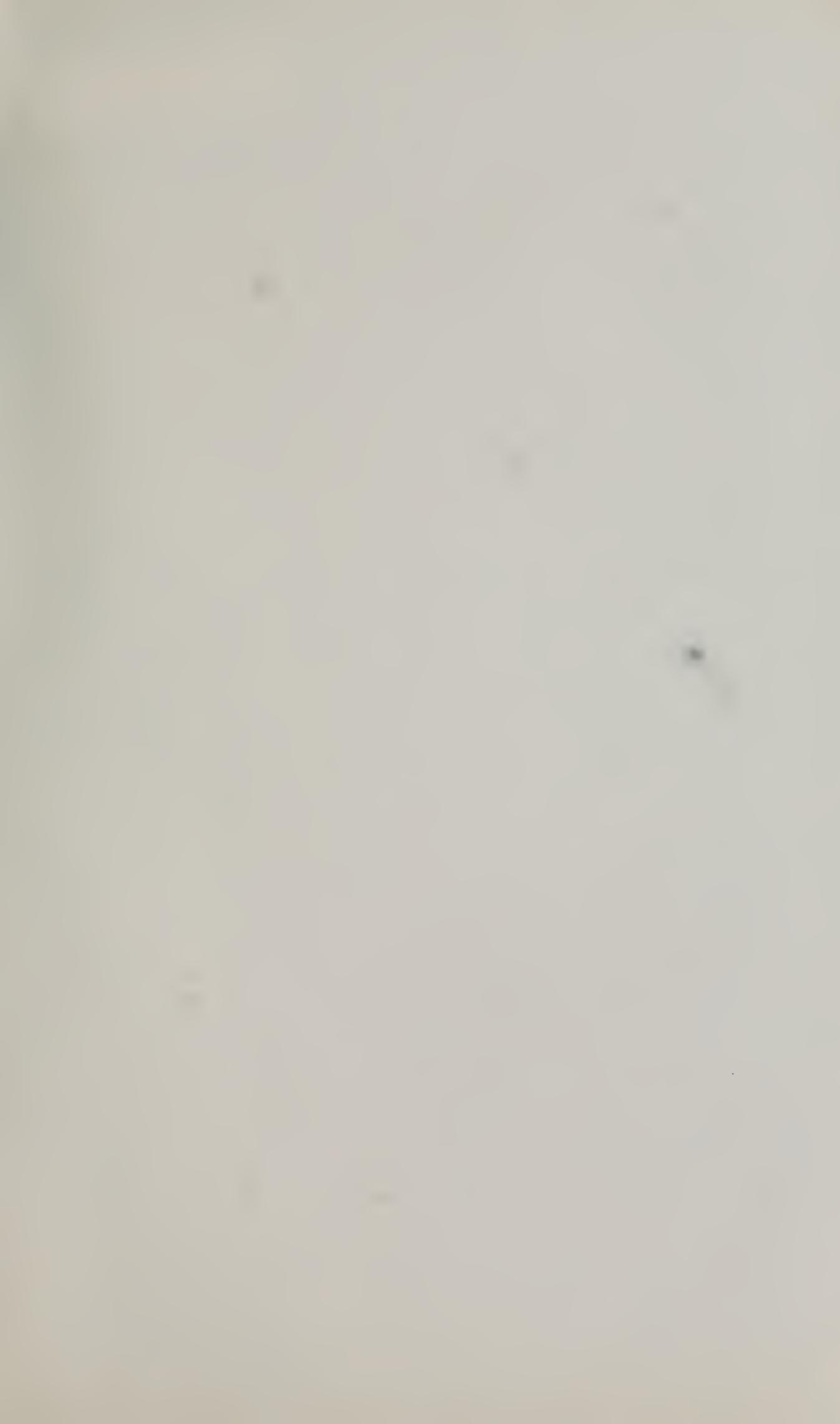
"It isn't worth much attention."

"The European integration is no longer a topical issue."

"They shouldn't propagate it because it ignores the reunification issue."

NO OPINION/NO ANSWER (11%) 114%@

@ Some respondents gave more than one answer.



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